

THE VOICE



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Calendar:

Board Meetings

ASK Office—160—68th St. SW
Grand Rapids, 49548

6:30 p.m., Public welcome.

- January 6, 2020
- February 3, 2020
- March 2, 2020
- April 13, 2020
- May 4, 2020
- June 1, 2020

Events:

Parent Support Group

- January 14, 2020
- February (TBD)
- March (TBD)

Social Group for Teens and Young Adults

- January 15, 2020
- January 28, 2020

Bowling Party

- January 19, 2020

Roller Skating Party

- February 22, 2020

Easter Egg Hunt

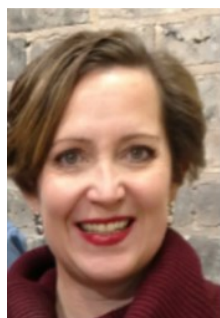
- March 28, 2020

Walk for Autism

- May 3, 2020

Golf Classic

- July 31, 2020



NEWS FROM ASK

Happy New Year!

Hope your holidays were restful and enjoyable. We greatly appreciate the many of you who have donated in support of the work that we do. We cannot exist without your financial contributions, so thank you again! You mean the world to us!

We are excited to start 2020 with some great changes and additions to what we are doing here at ASK!

First of all as you may know, we have accepted a spot in the new Special Olympics Unified Sports and Inclusion Center.

Housing our office here allows us to better collaborate with other organizations, increase our programming, and remain at the heart of what's going on in serving those with special needs in West Michigan. The new Special Olympics Center is located in the old South Christian High School building and offers many opportunities for use of an auditorium, two gyms, athletic fields and equipment, two kitchens, and much more. We expect to hold many of our events at this location.

Immediately, with the new space, we are able to launch a program that's been on our minds for a while— a Social Group for Teens and Young Adults with Autism. Autism can be lonely for this age group, and we often hear that teens and young adults lack opportunities for friendship or social outings. We hope to change that! Starting right away in January, we will begin hosting a social group twice each month. We will offer crafts, games, movies, gym time, snacks, music, dance, whatever! We hope that participants can help us plan the events as we move along, too. If you have a teen or young adult who is looking for some fun and friends, please join us on January 15 and January 28! Details are in the newsletter and on our website.

As always, we continue to expand and grow our current programs and are always working to serve the special people with autism in our lives in the best way we can. As we continue to look forward into the new year, we appreciate your support, your presence, and your input.

Thank you for being part of the family of ASK!

Pam Liggett
ASK Executive Director



Special Olympics Unified Sports and Inclusion Center
160 – 68th Street SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49548

COMING SOON: Special Olympics Open House to Try the SO Sports Offerings!

Autism Support of Kent County presents

Dr. Anthony Richtsmeier



Anthony J. Richtsmeier, MD

Tuesday, January 14, 2020

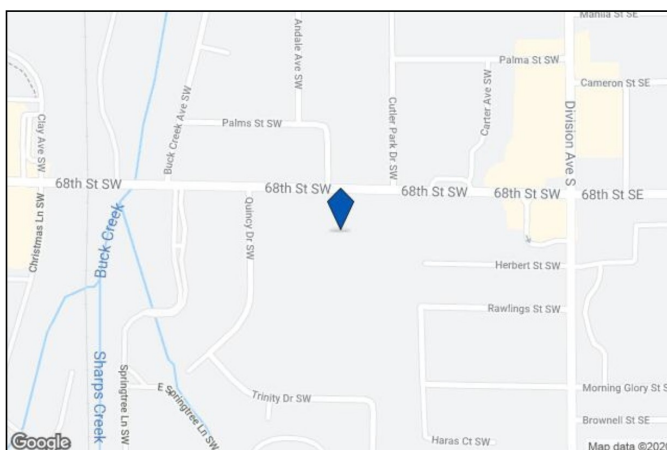
7:00 p.m.

**ASK Office
160—68th Street SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49548**

Join us as we welcome our guest speaker, Dr. Tony Richtsmeier. Dr. Tony is a founding member of the Helen DeVos Children's Hospital Autism Clinic, as well as one of Michigan's most respected autism practitioners.

Dr. Tony will touch briefly on genetics and its role in autism and will spend the rest of the evening answering questions and discussing issues of importance to attendees.

No RSVP is needed and everyone is welcome. Please enter through the main doors of the Special Olympics Center.



**For more information, call
ASK at (616) 752-8577**



SOCIAL GROUP

TEENS AND
YOUNG
ADULTS

\$5 PER
PARTICIPANT



LET'S GATHER FOR SOME FUN!

Wednesday, January 15 6:30 -- 8:00 p.m.

Tuesday, January 28 6:30 -- 8:00 p.m.

We are excited to announce a brand new group for any teen or young adult with autism who is looking to get out, have fun, and make some friends!

Each month we will host two gatherings. Most of the events will be held at our new location, inside the Special Olympics Unified Sports and Inclusion Center. We hope to seek input from attendees as to what activities we will offer -- crafts, games, food, snacks, movies, gym time, art, dance, music, etc. Gatherings are open to everyone -- caregivers must attend too.

Please register before each gathering, so we can plan for materials and supplies. Call Pam at 752-8577 if you have any questions.

Registration:
www.autismsupportofkentcounty.org/events



160 - 68th Street SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49548



Enjoy the BIG SCREEN experience in an accepting environment! Developed in partnership with Family Hope Foundation, Sensory Showtimes make movies extra welcoming to guests with special needs, including autism. So come relax, be yourself, and enjoy a movie at Celebration! Cinema! Lights will dim, but remain on • Volume will be lowered • Movies begin at show time with limited previews • Shown in 2D with open captioning • Cheering, calling out, or even strolling around the theatre is welcome!



Dolittle
January 25



Sonic the Hedgehog
February 22



Onward
March 14

10:30 a.m. showing with regular matinee pricing.
Check the website for a theatre near you at
<https://www.celebrationcinema.com/cinemas>

♥ **HAPPY**
Valentine's
DAY ♥

AUTISM SUPPORT OF KENT COUNTY PRESENTS

BOWLING

FAIRLANES BOWLING CENTER

3335 Fairlanes Avenue, Grandville

**Sunday,
January 19**

4:00 to 6:00 PM

**\$3
Per
Person**



**OPEN TO ALL AGES. INCLUDES 2 HOURS OF BOWLING,
SHOE RENTAL, PIZZA AND POP!**

Sign up on the ASK website:

www.autismsupportofkentcounty.org/events

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Conferences, Workshops, and Webinars

MDHHS Future of Behavioral Health Public Forum

January 9, 2020 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

L.V. Eberhard Center: Room 201

301 Fulton Street West, Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Please join the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) for a conversation about the future of behavioral health in Michigan. To register: <https://bit.ly/2Fj3uZp>

Rethinking Guardianship Facilitating Lifelong Self Determination (Free Event)

March 4, 2020 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Kent ISD ESC Building (Parking Lot #11)

2930 Knapp St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525

This workshop covers guardianship from a historical perspective, strangers as guardians, and alternatives to guardianship. Register online at:

<https://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/event-registration/>

2020 Michigan CEC Conference

March 4 – 6, 2020

Amway Grand Plaza, Grand Rapids, MI

Michigan CEC is celebrating its 80th annual conference by presenting national speakers, over 120 breakout sessions, 40+ exhibitors and unique networking opportunities. Register at: <https://www.cvent.com/events/80th-annual-michigan-council-for-exceptional-children-conference/registration-78c3ca29c9a443c78d00496edd24eb3c.aspx?fq=true>

Navigating Autism Today Conference

March 6, 2020

Wayne County Community College District

Ted Scott Campus/Belleville

To register: <https://autismallianceofmichigan.org/2020-navigating-autism-today-conference-registration/>

19th Annual START Conference

Fueling Engagement for Meaningful Outcomes

April 27, 2020 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center

219 S Harrison Rd, East Lansing, MI 48824

To register: <https://www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter/cms-form-edit.htm?formId=103D1579-90D9-8B86-9C1F457C17029335>

Autism One Conference

May 20–24, 2020

Loews Chicago O'Hare Hotel

Rosemont, IL 60018

Attend specialized lecture tracks designed to cover the newest information on subjects ranging from support for parents facing a new diagnosis to the education of medical professionals on the latest research and treatments. Register: <https://autismone.ticketspice.com/autismone-2020-conference>

Michigan Alliance for Families

On Demand Webinar Series

A webinar is an online presentation you can attend without having to leave your home or office. It's an opportunity to hear an expert speak for about an hour on a topic that interests you. These free webinars can be viewed anytime on the Michigan Alliance for Families YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/MichiganAlliance/videos>



The 2020 Spartan YMCA Family Hope Program

The YMCA Family Hope program is designed to provide parents and young adults diagnosed with ASD an opportunity to gather at the YMCA to participate in engaging social and physical activity and find emotional support and fellowship with similar families.

Program participants meet for two hours once a month (6:30 to 8:30 p.m.) at the Spartan Stores YMCA in Wyoming by Metro Hospital (unless otherwise noted). Each monthly event serves 12–24 young adults, plus their parents/caregivers. There is no cost to participate. **2020 Dates:**

Friday, January 17, 6:30–8:30 pm: Bowling at Fairlanes Bowling Alley in Grandville. Cost is \$10 and includes shoe rental.

Friday, February 7, 6:30–8:30 pm: Aqua Aerobics at Spartan Stores YMCA. There is no cost for this event.

The physical activities have instructors, are low impact, and designed for all motor skill levels. Board Games and the YMCA Activity Room are available at all times for families who want less physical activity.

We hope to gain your support and advocacy for YMCA Family Hope. Interested families that have more specific questions can contact the Spartan YMCA at (616) 855-9622.

Christy Gage, Family Hope Event Coordinator
YMCA OF GREATER GRAND RAPIDS
SPARTAN STORES YMCA
5722 Metro Way, Wyoming, MI 49519
(P) 616-885-5500
(E) cgage@grymca.org (W) www.grymca.org





ASK Roller Skating Party



Saturday,
February 22, 2020
11 a.m. — 1 p.m.

**3330 Fairlanes Avenue SW
Grandville, MI 49418**

*Skating, skate rental, and pizza
lunch included. We will have
Tarry Hall all to ourselves!*

There is no charge for this event!

RSVP on the ASK website:

www.autismsupportofkentcounty.org/events

All ages and siblings welcome!

One parent or guardian must be in attendance.



Puzzle Partners is a program of Autism Support of Kent County for teens and young adults. It is a friendship/social group for teens and young adults who have Asperger Syndrome, high-functioning autism, or some other social impairment. Puzzle Partners creates a safe space for teens and young adults to belong, try new things, make friends, and expand their horizons.

Some of the past activities include: archery, bowling, writing group with a published author, Craig's Cruisers, Griffins hockey Game, baseball game, dinner at restaurants, cooking new recipes, board game nights, learning Zentangle, discussion groups, Grand Rapids Public Museum, pottery, Craft Sale, building boats from recyclables and floating them down the Grand River, building and launching rockets, decorating gingerbread houses, Sky Zone, Glow Golf, holiday parties, and Art with Dixie painting classes.

All prospective members are encouraged to contact Puzzle Partners at puzzlepartnersya@gmail.com.





SAVE THE DATE!
Autism Support of Kent County
WALK FOR AUTISM

SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2020

Join Over 600 Participants!



5TH ANNUAL WALK FOR AUTISM • Noon to 3:00 pm

John Ball Park and Zoo
1300 Fulton W., Grand Rapids

**Fun • Food • Kids' Activities • Music • Resource Fair
Zoo Pass • T-Shirt • Walk in John Ball Park**

JOIN TODAY AT WWW.FIRSTGIVING.COM

AUTISM SUPPORT OF KENT COUNTY WALK FOR AUTISM

AUTISM SUPPORT OF KENT COUNTY, INC. (GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN) IS A NON-PROFIT 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION OF PARENTS, SCHOOL STAFF, AND OTHERS WHO ACTIVELY SEEK TO SUPPORT AND ADVOCATE FOR PERSONS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD) AND THEIR FAMILIES.

Straight School Mailing Day 2019



Not only are the students in the Straight School Transition Program great workers, but they are also so fun to be around! They helped us by putting together our very large year-end mailing. They did an awesome job and made us laugh a lot!



When you shop at **AmazonSmile** and designate Autism Support of Kent County as your charity, Amazon will donate 0.5% of your purchase to ASK.

For more information, and to add ASK as your charity of choice, visit: <http://smile.amazon.com>

Thank you and happy shopping!



**Heart of West Michigan
United Way**

Heart of West Michigan United Way investors can choose to designate all or part of their annual contributions to Autism Support of Kent County.

To designate your gift to ASK, use the United Way Designation Form and write: *Autism Support of Kent County, Grand Rapids, Michigan.* Thank you!

Visit our website to view and/or download the ASK Community Resource Directory:
www.autismsupportofkentcounty.org



Our generous donors are the reason we exist. Thank you to our many loyal supporters! In addition to those who sponsor and donate to our events, we would like to express our gratitude to the following people for their gifts in 2019. Thank you all for helping us make a difference to autism families all over West Michigan!

Kelly Dawson
Dr. David May and Breton Gardens Family
Dentistry
Annette Stark
Dan and Sandi Folkertsma
Randall and Lori Jager
Timothy and Shirley Layle
Joseph and Deborah Russo
Doug Domine
The Powless Family
Mitch and Belinda Stapley
Paul Swanson
David and Mary Veldink
Dan Baker and Marne Wittung-Baker
George Kerr
Lisa's Quality Rags
Magna Mirrors
John Otto Staffen
Jeffrey and Michelle Raeber In Memory of
Donna VanOeveren
Don and Diane VanOeveren In Memory of
Donna VanOeveren
Nancy Wiersma In Memory of Donna
VanOeveren

Dorothy French In Memory of Donna
VanOeveren
Margaret Downer In Memory of Wendy
Duncan
Gail Mazurek In Memory of Wendy Duncan
Constance Reiss In Memory of Wendy
Duncan
Sharon Attar
Donald Meyers
Mary Jones
Jennie Nichols
Kelly Grieve
Christie Nutkins
Robin Easley
Dana Heimstra
Dave Durham
Brad and Cathy Carey-Neale
Terri Francik
Mary Long
Herman Faceson
Donald Wilson
Heartbeat LLC In Memory of Michael
Cannon, Sr.

Remember ASK in Your Estate Plan

We often receive gifts in memory of an individual who has been touched by autism.
Thank you to these special families who think of ASK at such a sad time.

Please remember ASK in your estate plans, too. These gifts are treated with the utmost care and respect. Contact us for more information on how you can include ASK in your charitable giving plans at 616-752-8577.



We had so much fun at this year's Holiday Party! What a great crowd — so many new faces and old friends! Special thanks to Santa for visiting, our wonderful Board Members who made this event possible and served us a tasty meal, and the extra volunteers who helped out. The yummy cakes came from Forest Hills Foods, and we are always grateful for their donation. Finally, thanks to the staff at the EGR Middle School for being so accommodating and friendly!





The Board of Directors of ASK would like to thank and recognize an anonymous donor for a gift to support the Holiday Party, This gift comes in memory of Mr. Michael Cannon, Sr, whose son, Michael Jr, is a big fan of the Holiday Party. Special thanks to the very special person who helps makes this fun event possible every year. We are so grateful for you!



AUTISM SUPPORT OF KENT COUNTY

P. O. BOX 150348
GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49515

Phone: (616) 752-8577
autismsupportofkentcounty.org
Email: info@autismsupportofkentcounty.org

Do you **facebook** ?

To find our Facebook page, simply type **Autism Support of Kent County** in the "Search" bar located in the upper left corner. Click on "like" to join our page and receive updates. *Be sure to tell your friends and family!*

Disclaimers

Articles, conferences, workshops, presenters or information contained in this newsletter or at meetings are not endorsed by Autism Support of Kent County. Articles occasionally offer information about medical/pharmacological research, treatment and therapies or legal issues. This information is given for informational purposes and is not intended to act as a substitute for professional advice. Readers are encouraged to consult with their own practitioners for individual or specific advice.



**Autism Support
of Kent County**

Autism Support of Kent County (ASK) in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization of parents, school staff, and others who actively seek to support and advocate for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families.

ASK is committed to partnering with local schools and agencies to promote the welfare of individuals with ASD in our community.

Please note that Autism Support of Kent County does not endorse any specific therapy, product, treatment, strategy, opinions, service, or individual.